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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 WARSAW 001760

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PM/SNA FOR JANZEN; EUR/NCE FOR PUTNEY; NSC FOR STERLING

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [MARR](#) [PL](#)  
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE ELECTIONS: INITIAL OUTLOOK AND PROGNOSIS

REF: WARSAW 1755 AND PREVIOUS

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Classified By: DCM Ken Hillas for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Early elections now seem more likely than at any other time since Law and Justice (PiS) won the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2005, but are still not completely certain. No action will be taken in moving forward on a resolution to dissolve the Sejm until September, with talk now of October 21 elections. Any election that takes place will likely focus on domestic issues, and the outcome will be determined by how well PiS and centrist rival Civic Platform (PO) campaign, and what the voter turnout is. Despite the Kaczynskis' high negatives, their party has a committed group of supporters which PO lacks, and they are skilled campaigners. Whoever wins will almost certainly need to form a coalition, meaning tough choices among potential partners. While the two leading parties (PiS and PO) are strong proponents of close U.S. ties, and are supportive of U.S. priorities, including continuing deployments in Afghanistan, and support for negotiating a Missile Defense site in Poland, an election campaign could lead to demands for more "benefits" to Poland for its support on these issues, and a PO government would be more inclined to phase out its deployment in Iraq. End Summary

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PM Says PiS and PO  
Will Work for New Elections  
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12. (SBU) As reported reftels, early elections seem more likely now than at any time during the turbulent Law and Justice (PiS)-led government which came to office after 2005 elections. In an August 13 speech and follow-up interviews Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski appeared to be setting the scene for elections. He said that any chance of rebuilding a coalition with former partners, the League of Polish Families (LPR) and Self Defense (SO) was over and that PiS would work with opposition Civic Platform (PO) to seek self-dissolution of the Sejm with an eye toward October 21 elections.

13. (U) Ironically, given the bad blood between PiS and PO, getting to new elections require that they work together. A motion of self dissolution requires support of two-thirds of the Sejm, or 307 out of 460 deputies. Even if PiS and PO maintain discipline and if PiS gathers votes from groups that have split off (such as the small group led by former speaker Marek Jurek) they will need the votes of at least a good portion of some other party, which is not yet secured. The Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), which has 56 members, has long called for early elections, but issued conflicting

messages in the past two days. After announcing August 13 that before there can be elections there must be a parliamentary investigation of the botched arrest attempt of a former SLD minister which ended in her suicide and into the Central Anti-Corruption Bureau's (CBA) activities leading to the dismissal of SO chief Andrzej Lepper, SLD leader Wojciech Olejniczak said August 14 that SLD would support the resolution to dissolve the Sejm. The Polish Peasants Party (PSL) has been silent on the matter; they would likely not gain much in elections, and could even lose seats. Former junior coalition parties SO and LPR want investigations first as well. They have perhaps the most to lose in early elections and could oppose any measure to bring them about.

14. (U) PM Kaczynski said that if a vote of self-dissolution fails, then he will resign, which will trigger a lengthy series of steps that would have to be taken before elections could take place. The president must first propose a new prime minister; if that candidate fails to get a vote of confidence, then the Sejm proposes a candidate. If that candidate fails, the president proposes another candidate. Only upon failure of that third candidate would the Sejm be dissolved. If PO and PiS work together, then ultimately the Sejm would be dissolved via this method, since they make up a majority of votes and could block any candidate. However, the length of the process opens the door for PiS to once again look for a way out if the Kaczynskis should decide elections would not be beneficial.

15. (U) SO and LPR are calling for a "constructive vote of no confidence," a measure requiring a two-thirds vote which would stave off elections by replacing the prime minister with a new candidate proposed by the Sejm. With only SO and LPR supporting the idea, this proposal has no chance of succeeding.

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Elections Would Likely Have  
No Clear Winner with Tough  
Coalition Choices  
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16. (SBU) The outcome of any election would be tough to predict. Recent opinion polls show PO ahead of PiS, but polls have proven unreliable in the past, in part because they do not always test whether the respondents intend to vote. With public disgust over politics very high, some analysts are predicting even lower turnout in any new elections than in 2005, which would help PiS. At that time PiS beat PO with an aggressive election campaign that mobilized its voters and painted PO leaders as elitist, ineffective, or worse. But PiS won in 2005 by playing to a sense a grievance among a large number of voters who felt they had not benefited from the transition to democracy and free market capitalism. This time they must run on their record. The Kaczynskis have very high negatives among the population as a large, but PiS as a party still has very loyal core voters in the rural areas, in the east of the country, and among the less educated and less well paid portions of the population. PiS has already begun to try to convince voters that the strong economy and dropping unemployment are the result of PiS leadership, but opinion polls show the public give them little credit for these gains. Their core voters still respond to the Kaczynski's law and order and nationalistic rhetoric, and will likely be convinced by drops in crime and efforts against corruption. PiS will seek to keep former LPR voters who came over to their side in 2005 by attention to conservative social and family issues.

17. (SBU) PO would run mainly against PiS, arguing that Poland has suffered from PiS's turbulent politics and sometimes embarrassing performance in foreign affairs. They will argue that today's economic gains resulted from earlier

policies and that unemployment has dropped because of a flood of workers going to other EU countries. They will seek to portray themselves, as in 2005, as a party of competence and honesty that will restore calm and good governance. But PO has internal splits, with one of its leaders, Jan Rokita, apparently sidelined, and with Donald Tusk not an effective vote getter. PO does not have the kind of dedicated voters PiS enjoys. Disaffection with the Kaczynskis and PiS among the better educated, wealthier, urban, and younger voters may not translate into votes for PO if members of these groups fail to show up to vote, as happened in 2005.

18. (SBU) The other parties have all lost ground since the 2005 elections, and it remains to be seen whether some post-2005 alliances will be effective in any new elections. Former coalition partners SO and LPR are in particular danger, having been effectively weakened by the Kaczynskis' efforts and their own excesses. If they run separately SO could retain its presence in the Sejm but with fewer numbers; LPR will almost certainly fall below the five percent threshold required to win seats. If they run together in their new party (League and Self Defense--LiS) they could, according to the polls, win ten to twelve percent. This is an untested combination, however, and there is little to bind Giertych and Lepper besides hatred for the Kaczynskis. Lepper and Giertych would each want to lead the party and competition between them is a given. But whether together or apart, both will build on their traditional populist and nationalist issues, but will include their opposition to foreign engagement in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, to Missile Defense, and to against further EU integration.

19. (SBU) The new alliance of left parties is also relatively untested and SLD has gained little in the polls from the new Left and Democrat (LiD) configuration, despite the efforts of former president Aleksander Kwasniewski. SLD or LiD will almost certainly win seats in new elections, enough to be courted as a possible coalition partner. Similarly, PSL could earn just enough votes (possibly picking up some from farmers disenchanted with Lepper) to win seats in a new parliament, making it an attractive partner for PO in particular. Like PO, PSL will concentrate on restoring calm and competence to government, as well as appealing to farmers on traditional issues. PSL has opposed Poland's presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, but has never gained traction from those issues. PSL's fortunes and numbers have declined steadily in recent elections and there is a chance they would not hit the five percent threshold needed to win seats.

110. (SBU) PO members have already begun to discuss the coalition possibilities should they come out on top. As noted above, PSL would be one obvious choice, and would give

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PO the rural element it is missing in its electorate. PSL leader Waldemar Pawlak could prove to be a tough negotiator, but joining a government would be one way to stave off PSL's demise and re-energize its appeal to farmers. The other, more controversial, choice for PO would be SLD/LiD. Opposition to the Kaczynskis has drawn the parties somewhat closer together, but PO is deeply divided over whether or not to join forces with a grouping dominated by post-communists and by elements of the former SLD government which they viewed as deeply corrupt. Finally, despite all the bad blood, a PO/PiS coalition cannot be ruled out. One reason it failed in 2005 was that, with PiS in the lead, PO felt it would not have any say in or control over the internal security mechanisms and ministries, and found this unacceptable. If PO is the lead party, it could swallow and create a coalition with PiS more on its own terms.

111. (SBU) Should PiS come out ahead, which cannot be ruled out, they too would face tough choices. It seems that building a coalition again with LPR and SO would be impossible for all sides. PiS too would likely court PSL.

Again, while the bad blood from the failed 2005 efforts to build a coalition with PO would make a PO-PiS coalition unlikely, it cannot be ruled out, no matter who comes in first.

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Implications for Top  
U.S. Priorities  
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¶12. (C) The implications of early elections and of any of the scenarios for a likely new government are significant, but not dire, for the U.S. As in 2005, we predict that any elections would be focused primarily on domestic issues, including attacks on PiS by all parties for its turbulent time in office, domestic economic issues, health care, and law and order. Only the minor parties (SO and LPR--and PSL on Iraq) will likely make opposition to issues of concern to us, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, or Missile Defense, a key element of their campaign platform. These parties have taken these positions in the past and not gained from them, and we do not foresee any of them suddenly gaining by highlighting their opposition on those key points of interest to the U.S. SLD will likely remain divided on these points. The party leadership, which set in motion Poland's participation in Iraq and Afghanistan and its willingness to negotiate a Missile Defense site during its term in government from 2001-2005, will not want to highlight these issues. It is also unlikely that these parties could dictate foreign policy as part of a coalition deal. Over the past several years there have been junior coalition partners--under both the SLD and PiS government--who opposed the Iraq deployment and other U.S. priorities but who have not been allowed to be involved in decision-making on those matters. That arrangement could remain in a new government led by PO or PiS.

¶13. (C) The problems could arise more in how PO or PiS handle moving forward, especially on Missile Defense. PO could well take up a posture of supporting MD and Poland's role in Iraq and Afghanistan, but pledging to demand more from the U.S. for its cooperation, much as PiS did during the 2005 elections. Pressure from PO and from the minor conservative parties could then drive PiS to up its rhetoric on these demands. Should there be significant casualties in either Iraq or Afghanistan, this could put pressure on PiS to adjust its commitments, or on PO to scale them back. In the long run, we believe that President Kaczynski will honor the commitments he made in Jurata and Washington, but PiS will want to show that it has gotten something from us for that loyalty, and PO may want to put its stamp on that engagement. PO shadow foreign minister Bronislaw Komorowski is much more inclined to phase out Poland's deployment in Iraq and would not likely, as foreign minister, want to see it extend beyond mid-2008.

¶14. (C) Foreign Minister Anna Fotyga and other officials have assured us that the September 6-7 MD negotiations will not be affected by the current situation, and that Missile Defense negotiations overall will go forward. A PO-led government would almost certainly continue MD negotiations, but could be more demanding in terms of benefits, creating bumps along the road. The simple reality of election dynamics and a change of government would almost certainly slow the process. Similarly, eventual ratification could be more difficult. Nonetheless, it is our assessment that ratification would not be imperiled.

¶15. (C) Comment: As we have noted several times, despite all the rhetoric, it is still possible the Kaczynskis will

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find a way to pull back from the election threat. If there are elections, the situation is fluid enough that the outcome cannot be predicted with certainty. However, the U.S. relationship remains key for the major political players and our close ties are not imperiled. Election campaigning,

however, can create difficulties in proceeding that we will  
need to manage. End Comment.  
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